



## **Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing**

### **Labor and Human Rights in Cambodia**

**Wednesday, September 11, 2019**

**3:00 – 4:30 PM**

**2200 Rayburn House Office Building**

### **Statement by Rep. Christopher H. Smith**

#### **As prepared for delivery**

I would like to thank our witnesses and my colleagues, in particular my colleagues from the Cambodia Caucus, for joining us at today's hearing.

It is particularly fitting that we focus attention on Cambodia, as it is too often overlooked. Memories of the “Killing Fields” that took place during the Khmer Rouge’s maniacal, genocidal rain of terror start to fade. Following the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991 and the subsequent optimism that a democratic constitutional

monarchy had been birthed, Cambodia was checked off and placed in the “Mission Accomplished” box, and attention drifted elsewhere.

Well, all is not well in Cambodia, and has not been for some time. The veneer of democracy is being stripped away, revealing the face of a dictator – Hun Sen.

While Hun Sen is not Pol Pot – one of history’s most heinous mass murderers – that does not bequeath upon him an implicit immunity.

Hun Sen must answer for the banning of the chief political opposition party, the Cambodian National Rescue Party, which was done under color of an order from the Supreme Court – an institution which he controls.

He must answer for his attacks on the press, which includes the closure of Radio Free Asia’s Phnom Penh bureau and the prosecution of two journalists who worked for FRA, Uon Chhin and Yeang Sothearin.

And he must answer for the jailing of political prisoners and the extrajudicial killings, which our State Department has identified in its 2018 human rights report as being done either by the government or on its behalf. In particular, we need answers as to the murder of Kem Ley, a critic of the regime.

Finally, I note that with regard to human trafficking, the Trump Administration downgraded Cambodia to the Tier 2 Watch List. Cambodia must do far more to address both labor trafficking – one of the issues we hope to hear more about at today’s hearing – and sex trafficking.

One issue in particular that was identified in our State Department’s 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report is the trafficking of women from rural areas of Cambodia into China. Many of these women are essentially sold as brides, as there is a ready market in China for marriageable women due gross gender imbalance attributable to decades of the one child policy and sex-selective abortion that targeted the girl child in the womb.

Cambodia must do more to protect its citizens, in particular its most vulnerable citizens, from the scourge of human trafficking.

Thank you.